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February 21, 1970

Stoessel-Lei Talks: Report of 136th Meeting,
February 20, 1970

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The American side met the Chinese side in the lobby of the American Embassy. The two principals shook hands and, after the two sides had stood briefly to allow press photography, proceeded together by elevator to the Embassy fourth floor and to the conference room.

Participants on both sides were:

United States

Ambassador Walter J. Stoessel, Jr.
Paul H. Kreisberg - Advisor
Donald M. Anderson - Interpreter
Thomas W. Simons, Jr. - Scribe

People's Republic of China

Charge d'Affaires Lei Yang
Li Chu-ching - Advisor
Ch'ien Yung-nien - Interpreter
Yeh Wei-lan - Scribe

Enroute to the conference room, Anderson told Ch'ien that I would like to invite the Charge to have a cup of tea in my office following the formal meeting. Ch'ien passed the word to Lei Yang as they were taking off their coats, but he did not respond to the question.

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PHKreisberg/DMAnderson/
TWSimons,Jr:afm/lva 2/20/70

Walter J. Stoessel, Jr.

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I opened the meeting.

I said: Mr. Charge, I am pleased to welcome you today to the American Embassy and would be very glad to hear any statement you wish to make.

Lei said: First of all I would like to thank Mr. Ambassador for your words of welcome.

Mr. Ambassador. At the 135th meeting, you formally stated that the United States Government wishes to improve Sino-US relations and to relax the tensions between the two countries. You also said that every effort possible should be made to overcome the serious difficulties existing between the two countries and that you looked forward to progress in this respect. The Chinese Government expresses its welcome to these indications from the United States Government. The Chinese Government has all along stood for conducting relations with countries of different social systems in accordance with the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence and for settlement of disputes between China and the United States through peaceful negotiation. As far back as 1955 we openly declared that the Chinese people are friendly to the American people. The Chinese people do not want to have a war with the United States of America. The Chinese Government is willing to sit down and enter into negotiations with the United States of America to discuss the question of relaxing tensions in the Far East, and especially to discuss relaxing tensions in the Taiwan area. This is what we have done consistently in the past fifteen years, and we are prepared to continue to do so in the future. The United States should be aware of this position of the Chinese Government.

We noted that in Mr. Ambassador's statement of January 20, you did not evade the crucial question in Sino-US relations. You referred to the question of concluding an agreement on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and dwelt upon the Taiwan question in some detail, admitting that this is the single most complicated problem in the relations between the two countries.

But at the same time you listed a series of other questions which you considered could be discussed, among which were not only questions concerning relations between the two countries but some international questions, and among the questions concerning relations between the two countries some were side issues. In this way, primary and secondary are confused and essential and non-essential are reversed. Thus the crucial question in the relations between the two countries is blurred.

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We have consistently held that the question of fundamental principle in the relations between the two countries should first of all be solved and that is the Taiwan question, which is related to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Only when this question is solved can fundamental improvement be brought about in Sino-US relations and the settlement of other questions be promoted. We are fully aware that the settlement of the Taiwan question requires making every effort to create the conditions.

The Sino-US ambassadorial talks which had been suspended for two years have now been resumed. In your statement at the first meeting, you expressed the hope that this would mark a new beginning. We also wish the same. However, we cannot but point out with regret that on the crucial Taiwan question there has still not been much change in your basic position. While indicating your wish to improve relations with the People's Republic of China, you declared that you intended to maintain "friendly" relations with the Chiang Kai Shek clique long overthrown by the Chinese people. While expressing willingness to discuss with us the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, you declared your intention to honor the so-called "commitment" to the Chiang Kai Shek clique. Is this not self-contradictory? Although in your statement at the previous meeting you said that you considered the Government of the People's Republic of China has the right to settle the Taiwan question as its own internal affair, you still do not give up the position of creating "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan", and you are very clear that this is what the entire Chinese people absolutely will not accept.

In order to resolve this important contradiction "more thorough exploration is indeed necessary", as said by Mr. Ambassador at the first meeting. There are certain difficulties in undertaking this task in the ambassadorial talks between the two countries. It appears that our two sides have both foreseen this situation. At the first meeting both came forward separately with the same view, that talks at a higher level might be held, and you went even further putting forward the idea of sending a representative to Peking or to Washington for discussion. If the U. S. Government wishes to send a representative of ministerial rank or a special envoy of the United States President to Peking for further exploration of questions of fundamental principle between China and the United States, the Chinese Government will be willing to receive him.

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Mr. Ambassador. I would like to emphasize once again the importance of settling the crucial question between China and the United States. Once a way to settle this question is found, the way will be paved for the settlement of other questions. As for the side issues in relations between the two countries, they are not difficult to solve. For instance, with regard to questions of U.S. criminals in China which you mentioned in your statement at the last meeting, customary practice can be followed; packets and letters can be transmitted, and visits by family members can be arranged through the Red Cross societies of the two countries, and this can still be done in the future.

That's all I have to say.

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I said: Mr. Chargé d'Affaires, the views of your Government, which you expressed at our meeting on January 20, have been given careful consideration at the highest level of my Government. I have listened with great interest to your remarks here today. I feel, as I suggested at our last meeting, that in spirit the views of our two governments on a number of issues may be closer now than they have been since these talks first began in 1955. I sincerely hope this is the case.

At our meeting on January 20 and again today, Mr. Chargé d'Affaires, you have emphasized the importance to your Government of the question of Taiwan and the necessity for some progress toward the resolution of this issue as part of any general improvement of Sino-US relations. The question of Taiwan is, without doubt, a major obstacle to better relations between our two governments, and we hope that as these meetings progress we will be able to arrive at some meeting of minds on this subject. My Government feels, however, that in our discussions we can and should move forward simultaneously, not only on the question of Taiwan, but also on the whole range of bilateral issues between our two countries. Progress on some such issues can be expected to contribute toward further progress on others. We have a problem of atmosphere, of building of confidence. This is essential to the easing of tensions and in turn, will contribute to a more rapid resolution of the more fundamental problems between us.

Mr. Chargé d'Affaires, let me state as clearly and as frankly as possible our position on the question of Taiwan. It is my Government's position that the question of the relationship between Taiwan and the mainland of China is one to be resolved by those directly involved. While we will continue to adhere to the principle that the resolution of this question should be by peaceful means, without resort to the threat or use of force, we do not intend to interfere in any peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question which might be reached between the People's Republic of China and the government in Taipei. Our relationships with the Republic of China are consistent with that position. The limited United States military presence in this area is not designed to influence the political settlement of this problem nor is it a threat to the security of the People's Republic of China. Furthermore, it is my Government's intention to reduce those military facilities which we now have on Taiwan as tensions in the area diminish. I believe my Government's position on this

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question is consistent with the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and my Government is willing, should you agree, to discuss with you a joint declaration incorporating the principles which I have discussed and affirming our two governments' adherence to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

Mr. Chargé d'Affaires, at our meeting on January 20 you stated that your Government is willing to consider and discuss whatever ideas and suggestions my Government might put forward in accordance with the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, therefore realling helping to reduce tensions between China and the United States.

I will not review again today all the proposals which I mentioned in my statement of January 20 on which my Government feels that meaningful progress can be made. I would, however, like to mention one or two specific matters relating to the question of greater contacts between our two peoples. As you know, my Government has progressively eased its regulations on travel to the People's Republic of China which were imposed in 1950. On March 15 of this year these regulations must again either be renewed or abolished. We are seriously considering their non-renewal in the hope that this will contribute to freer contact between the people of our two countries.

Similarly, my Government has amended its regulations governing trade with the People's Republic of China, permitting at least the beginning of an exchange of goods between our two peoples. The United States believes that further amendment of our controls on trade should be possible in the near future. An expression of interest on your part in improving and developing contacts in such areas would be noted with great interest by my Government and the American people.

Mr. Chargé d'Affaires, as you know, in December of 1950 my Government and the Government of the People's Republic of China both took action to block the financial assets of the other country's citizens. The effect of these actions has been to prevent the development of trade and the settlement of obligations legitimately owed to the other side. Your Government in the past has expressed interest in resolving these questions. I am prepared, should you be interested, to discuss arrangements for the expansion of trade in general and for the settlement of all debts between our two countries, including the unblocking of those

financial assets now controlled by both sides.

Mr. Chargé d'Affaires, at our meeting on January 20 I indicated the importance with which the American people view the question of United States citizens who are either missing or held prisoner in China. I want to emphasize again that progress on this issue would be taken as a welcome sign that our two countries have moved away from the old hostilities of the past and have moved toward a new and more constructive relationship. For example, in those cases where an American has nearly completed his prison sentence, it would be a small but significant step if your Government could arrange to commute the short period which still remains and enable him to return to the United States. The families of Americans who are missing in the area of China inquire regularly about the fate of these men. Simple confirmation of whether they are alive or dead would be greatly appreciated.

In conclusion, Mr. Chargé d'Affaires, I would like to express my Government's pleasure that this series of ambassadorial-level meetings has been resumed and that we have met again after only one month. As I indicated in our previous meeting, the United States is prepared to consider with you the possibility of sending a representative to your country or receiving your representative in the United States, should progress at these talks indicate that this would be useful in improving relations between our two countries. I have noted your specific statement today, about receiving a representative in Peking, and I will transmit it to my Government. As you know, it is my Government's view that these exchanges can make a valuable contribution toward the gradual resolution of the problems between our two countries. I believe we have made a useful start, and I hope that we will be able to make further progress based on a spirit of mutual understanding.

Lei said: Mr. Ambassador. I have listened to your statement carefully. On the question of Taiwan, I have clearly set forth the position and attitude of our Government in my statement made at our first meeting as well as in my statement today. I will therefore not repeat them again. As regards your statement today, I will report this to my Government. I am not prepared to make any comment on such concrete questions as trade, exchange of personnel, exchanges of visits by personnel of our two countries, that you have mentioned today. That's all.

I said: Mr. Chargé. I noted that you referred in your statement to the question of letters, packages, and visits by family members to prisoners in China. This of course is welcomed as a continuation of your policies of the past. However, unfortunately this does not carry us any further beyond the present situation.

Mr. Chargé d'Affaires, in my statement today I mentioned the question of prisoners who have nearly completed their sentences and those Americans missing in the area of China. I would like to mention specifically two persons as examples of the type of cases we have in mind. Robert Fecteau, who was captured by your authorities in 1951, has nearly completed the twenty years to which he was sentenced, and the wife of Lt. Joseph Dunn, whose plane was shot down near Hainan Island, frequently asks about his fate. I hope that your Government will give sympathetic consideration to the view I have set forward on those cases, as well as to the more general problem posed by other Americans either imprisoned or missing in China.

Mr. Chargé, on another question, I would like to ask a question for clarification. You mentioned higher-level meetings. Is it your understanding and preference that a higher-level meeting would replace our ambassadorial-level meetings, or would you envisage that we would continue our ambassadorial-level meetings in preparation for any higher-level meeting in the future?

That's all.

Lei said: I am not prepared to make any further comments today on the question of American prisoners in China. But I will report what Mr. Ambassador has said today on this question to my Government.

As regards the question of meetings at a higher level, which Mr. Ambassador has referred to in your statement, I have

already indicated our position very clearly in my statement today (sic), but I will be interested in listening to any ideas Mr. Ambassador has on this question.

If on this question, that is, meetings at a higher level, if Mr. Ambassador has any ideas or any suggestions, I'll be ready to report them to my Government.

I said: On the question of higher-level meetings, we naturally would like to provide the U. S. Government with as clear an idea as possible of what you have in mind. For example, one question which might arise concerning such a meeting is whether such a visit would be given publicity or would be maintained in confidence. Any other indications from your Government as to your views would be appreciated. However, if you are not able to add today to what you have said on this subject, I will report to my Government what you have stated.

Lei said: Well, Mr. Ambassador, I have nothing more to say today.

I said: Mr. Charge, would you like me to make a suggestion with regard to our next meeting.

Lei said: Yes, please.

I said: I would suggest that we handle the question the same way as last time, that is that our liaison officers are to be in touch with regard to our next meeting, which would be at your Embassy.

Lei said: I agree to Mr. Ambassador's suggestion regarding the date for our next meeting, that is, that the date would be discussed and decided on later by our liaison personnel. Since this time our side proposed the date, it would be your turn to propose the date for the next meeting.

I said: We agree.

Mr. Charge, again with regard to the press, I suggest that we handle the press the same way as last time.

Lei said: Yes. I agree.

I said: Mr. Charge, I think we are finished with official business for today, and would like to invite you for tea in my office next door.

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(Lei began to answer before the interpretation. Ch'ien reminded him of the need to await the interpretation. Anderson asked Lei whether he had understood everything. He replied — laughing with some embarrassment — that he had but nonetheless invited Anderson to interpret.)

Lei said: I thank you for your invitation, but since I already have appointments, that question of having a cup of tea can be settled through our liaison personnel. We can find some other time. I will let you know. Thank you for the concrete arrangements for this meeting and for your hospitality. Goodbye.

(On departing, Lei made a brief statement, interpreted into English by Ch'ien, to the press in the lobby. It noted that the 136th ambassadorial-level meeting had taken place here today and that the two sides would be in touch concerning the date of the next meeting.)

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